UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/2090
28 February 1996

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* General Assembly and Security Council, voting concurrently, elect Gonzalo Parra-Aranguren of Venezuela to fill vacant seat on International Court of Justice.

* Secretary-General says UN is trapped in paradox of expanding responsibilities and diminishing resources and its Chief Officer must be politician, diplomat, administrator, magician and super beggar.

* To date, 39 Member States are more than two years in arrears in financial contributions to United Nations.

* Bosnian Serbs continue to leave Sarajevo suburbs after stripping assets and infrastructure; UN sends 90 civilian police monitors into Serbian suburb of Ilidza.

* United Nations Population Division's work seriously affected by Organization's financial crisis.

* Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination adds Liberia and Guatemala to list of countries under its "early warning and urgent procedures" mechanism.

* * *

The General Assembly and the Security Council, voting concurrently, today elected Justice Gonzalo Parra-Aranguren of Venezuela to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). He will fill the seat left vacant by the death of Judge Andres Aguillar Mawdsley also of Venezuela. Mr. Parra-Aranguren, a distinguished jurist, has been a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague, the Netherlands, since 1985. He was a member of the legislative committees which drafted a section of the Venezuelan Constitution dealing with nationality and represented his country at a number of sessions of The Hague Conference on Private International Law.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

Elections to the Court require an absolute majority in both the Council and the Assembly. Mr. Parra-Aranguren, whose term will expire in the year 2000, was elected in the first round of secret balloting in the Council. He received 97 votes in the second ballot in the General Assembly, where the required majority is 94 votes. The other candidates for the seat were Julio A. Barberis of Argentina and Francisco Villagran Kramer of Guatemala.

* * *

The United Nations was trapped in a paradox of expanding responsibilities and diminishing resources and its Chief Administrative Officer must have the skills of a politician, diplomat, administrator and, judging by the recent negative growth budget, a magician and a super beggar, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today. He was speaking at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil, after receiving a medal of honour on the second day of his official visit to the country.

Globalization and fragmentation were beginning to shape the world environment, he said. Globalizing trends, including international financial flows, ready access to information and television's ability to reach even the poorest societies shaped policy decisions. Threats to the global environment, such as excessive carbon emissions, could affect future development and epidemics did not recognize national borders. Fragmentation, as evidenced by ethnic, cultural and religious resentment affected States. On the positive side, as state controls were relaxed, citizens, non-governmental organizations and business and religious groups were able to articulate their needs more than ever.

Individuals and States could not do much in the face of such powerful forces, however, the international community could articulate common values, policies and a common approach to peace through the United Nations, the Secretary-General said. Outlining an 8-point agenda, he said the UN's cycle of global conferences could raise awareness of the problems of globalization. It could also help settle conflicts arising from fragmentation through preventive diplomacy and take a stand on "orphan conflicts" such as Afghanistan's, which fell outside national interests. While supporting disarmament, the UN could draw attention to the destructive aspects of the trade in conventional weapons, small arms and landmines which contributed to fragmentation.

The Secretary-General said he faced hard choices. The UN could not solve all the world's problems, but attention must be given to priorities determined by Member States. The UN must decentralize and delegate by encouraging assistance from regional organizations, and its mandates should be clear, realistic and backed by adequate resources. Although the Secretary-General had to sometimes accept the role of scapegoat, it was essential to maintain the United Nations credibility. States must not be allowed to avoid

a problem and then blame the UN for failing to solve it. Finally, continuing UN reform was essential to ensure financial and political support, he said.

* * *

As of today, 39 of the 185 Member States of the United Nations were more than two years behind in their financial contributions to the Organization. A UN spokesman said that meant those countries came under Article 19 of the Charter.

Under Article 19, a Member State which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions will lose its voting rights in the General Assembly if the amount equals or exceeds the contributions due for the preceeding two years. However, the Assembly may permit the Member to vote if it is satisfied the failure to pay is due to conditions beyond the country's control

* * *

The United Nations International Police Task Force (IPTF) will deploy 90 monitors into the Sarajevo suburb of Ilidza tomorrow, when the Bosnian Federation police were expected to begin patrolling, according to a United Nations spokesman. Serbs were continuing to move out of the area, stripping whatever they could from buildings. Equipment from schools, hospitals and offices had been removed and several factories reportedly dismantled. There had also been some disputes over property ownership in Vogosca, as more former owners returned to the once totally Serb suburb, she added.

Currently, 337 IPTF civilian monitors were serving throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina and another 164 were being processed in Zagreb. The spokesman said IPTF's mandate expired on 21 December and hopefully it would reach at least half of its authorized strength of 1,721 police officers before then. However, the UN had not heard from many countries that had pledged personnel. Neither the United States, which had promised 200 police, including 50 for Eastern Slavonia, nor Germany, which had pledged 140 police, had supplied the UN with any names, she added.

* * *

The United Nations Population Division was trying to do more work with less resources, but its efforts were being significantly affected by the UN's financial crisis, according to the Division's Director, Joseph Chamie. Addressing the Commission on Population and Development, today, he said the trend was expected to continue and the Division's work programme was in serious question.

Several speakers noted that the UN's cycle of international conferences had produced agreements which increased the demands on the Division, while the United Nations financial crisis had reduced its budget allocations. Earlier, Mr. Chamie urged the Commission to address the complex issues surrounding abortion, the aging populations, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. International migration was another issue of concern to many Governments and one of the most contentious topics of debate in national elections.

* * *

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has placed Liberia and Guatemala on the list of countries under its "early warning and urgent procedures" mechanism. The Committee, which began its forty-eighth session in Geneva on Monday, monitors the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The current list of countries includes Israel, Rwanda Burundi, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

The Committee's early warning mechanism allows it to take measures which help prevent problems from escalating into conflicts. It can also initiate urgent procedures in response to problems that need immediate attention to prevent or limit serious violations of the Convention. The Committee removed Algeria and Mexico from the list, as it considered the situation in those countries could be examined in their annual reports. It also decided to postpone further action on the situation in Papua New Guinea until the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the country is published.

* *** *